

NINE GAMES FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

by George Blank



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**Until they go to school, children think that learning is fun, not work. Is this the reason they learn more quickly in the early years?
Play is natural learning. And, learning is great play!**

NINE GAMES FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN is a collection of ten programs that exist in the computer memory together, but execute one at a time. The first program is a menu that displays symbols for the other programs. The child may return the computer to the menu from any other program by pressing the CLEAR button, then call another program. To go from the menu to the other programs, simply press the number beside the symbol for the program the child wants. **Note:** In two programs, NAMES and CALCULATOR, there are input statements which **will not** accept CLEAR. In those programs, the child will quickly learn to press ENTER to get to a point in the program that accepts a CLEAR, but an adult should help them to learn this. The one key on the keyboard that will disrupt the programs is BREAK, but my own four-year old, who has yet to learn his alphabet, learned to type RUN after watching my six-year old do it once. I keep a card with the word RUN on it near the computer to remind him, but he never looks at it.

It would be best for an adult to assist the child until he or she could do these operations:

1. Press a number to go from the menu to the desired program. Children too young to recognize the numbers do it by learning the location of the 1 and counting.
2. Pressing CLEAR to get out of a program they tire of, or to switch programs.

3. Either learn not to press BREAK, or learn to type RUN and press ENTER.
4. Learn to press ENTER and try CLEAR again if the screen goes blank when they press CLEAR. In NAMES, they might have to do this several times.

I have taught 4-year olds to do these four things in fifteen minutes. My boys have taught their friends in five. Children younger than four should have adult supervision at the computer. A nine-month old girl who visits our home frequently loves to play REPEAT, so the games have potential for the very young.

The author has a degree in education, with graduate study in child development and counseling, plus a wide variety of teaching experience in industry, the military, public and private schools and churches, in addition to his qualifications as a father and computerist.

(1)

LETTERFUN

This game uses the computer screen for a blackboard until a control character such as ENTER is pressed. It then provides animated displays of the letters entered at random. The letters may be repeated, moved around on the screen, or even exploded and scattered. The object of the game is to increase letter recognition, pattern discrimination, and interest in words.

(2)

ABC

This game gives children an opportunity to practice their alphabet order. It is designed to move the child from the point at which he must say to himself "ABCDEFGHJKLM..." before pressing N to the place where he knows immediately that N follows M. If the child selects the next letter in sequence, the figure on the screen smiles. If the child is wrong, the man shakes his head.

(3)

LETTER WARS

Lower case letters are harder than upper case for children to learn. This game gives them practice in associating the large lower case letters on the screen with the upper case letters on the keyboard. This game is best played in a group, as the children will talk about the letters and teach each other the names and possibly even the sounds. The space battle results are based on the accuracy of the guesses and provide motivation.

(4)

REPEAT

This game also uses the video display for a blackboard, but the computer prints each letter typed 32 times to fill up a row. All four arrow keys are enabled, so that the children can print rows of arrows on the screen. This game deliberately develops pattern recognition to prepare children for word recognition and art. My own children love to use the slash, greater than, and less than signs to make "tire tracks" across the screen.

(5)

NAMES

This game provides a good introduction to the computer for children old enough to recognize their names. An adult should enter six names (the child, family members, pets, friends) and the computer will select them at random and print them on the screen, pausing after each fifty names. This is also good practice for beginning readers to learn new words. On their own, children will enter names, patterns, or words and delight in the random pattern. Until six names are entered, or at least until ENTER is pressed six times, this game will not accept CLEAR to return to the menu.

(6)

BLACKBOARD

This game simply uses the screen as a blackboard. The only special features are that the arrows are enabled. The lower case left arrow erases, but all others, upper and lower case, print the arrows.

(7)

TROLL'S GOLD

This game is a chase through a maze in which doors open and close at random. The object is to go to the pile of gold in the lower right hand room, get the gold, return to the first room and go up the stairs without being caught and eaten by the troll. The child presses the appropriate arrow when a door opens and the computer pauses for an instruction. The computer waits for twenty seconds if the child does not enter a direction and then continues. This game teaches directions and eye-hand coordination.

(8)

MATH DRILL

This is a drill in elementary addition and subtraction. The numbers to be added or subtracted do not go above nine, and subtraction never results in a negative number. Since this is designed for young children, graphic blocks are displayed for counting.

(9)

CALCULATOR

This is a normal four-function calculator, except that the results are displayed in the form children will be using in school. For answers to division problems beyond the range of the integer function, the answer is rounded off, otherwise the remainder is displayed. You must use this format:

(First Number)
(; or + or A, - or S, X or M or *, / or D)
(Second Number)
(ENTER or Space Bar)

OTHER PROGRAMS BY GEORGE BLANK

Santa Paravia and Fiumaccio
December 1978 SoftSide
Instant Software

Round The Horn
January 1979 SoftSide

Dive Bomb
March 1979 SoftSide

Fog Index
March 1979 SoftSide

Day of The Week Routine
May 1979 SoftSide

Micro Millionaire
June 1980 SoftSide

Simple Simon
March 1979 Prog/80

Rescue
May 1979 PROG/80

Day/Date Routine
September 1979 PROG/80

Preference Poll
December 1979 PROG/80

Writing System Tapes
April 1980 PROG/80

Z-80 Disassembler
June 1980 PROG/80

Pork Barrel
The Software Exchange

Super Simon
Ramworks

Automated Disk Directory
The Software Exchange

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LETTERFUN - ABC - LETTER WARS - REPEAT - NAMES -
BLACKBOARD - TROLL'S GOLD - MATH DRILL - CALCULATOR



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